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ABSTRACT

This study reports on the job challenges and corresponding response strategies that department chairs at graduate and undergraduate colleges and universities encounter and rely upon. Literature and research related to marketing department chairs, marketing education, and marketing majors indicates that business schools have come under attack by business leaders who call for marketing chairs to emphasize teaching excellence, establish relationships with business, and develop a vision for the future. Communities are challenging business schools to provide an adequately prepared labor pool, and here too the ultimate responsibility falls on the department chair. A stratified random sample (n=100) out of a total population of 676 public four-year colleges and universities was surveyed for the study. The sample included 50 marketing department or division chairs from graduate institutions and 50 from undergraduate institutions. Analysis of the survey found that the primary challenges at both graduate and undergraduate institutions included faculty, curriculum, money, and quality issues. Primary response strategies for dealing with these challenges included developing partnerships, curriculum reviews, and seeking external dollars. Few significant differences were identified between the chairs from the two different types of institutions. (Contains 22 references.) (RH)

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Administrative Challenges and Response Strategies to the Job Performance of Marketing Department Chairs

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Abstract

Marketing department must rely on their human resources to be responsive to labor market and academic needs. Specifically, this operationalization is drawn from the leadership of academic department chairs. The current study reports on the job challenges and corresponding response strategies that department chairs at graduate and undergraduate colleges and universities encounter and rely upon. Using a sample of 100 department chairs, few significant differences were identified between the chairs from the two different types of institutions.

Enrollment trends for undergraduate marketing programs have consistently decreased during the past decade (Chonko & Roberts, 1996; Gwinner & Beltramini, 1995; Jones, Leauby, & Bohl, 1995; Keillor et al., 1995; Tom, O'Grady, & Swanson, 1995). Part of the decrease in enrollment in marketing programs is by design. For example, some marketing programs have decreased enrollments by raising requirements for entrance in order to increase the enrollment in other areas of study in the business school (Robicheaux, 1998). Another reason for the decrease can be attributed to the lack of interest in business or marketing as a major area of study by incoming freshmen (Mason, 1995). Not only has there been a decrease in enrollment trends in business schools, but over the past decade business schools have come under attack by business and industry leaders (Chonko & Caballero, 1991; Chonko & Roberts, 1996; Keillor et al., 1995; Kress & Wedell, 1993). Many business and marketing graduates, as reported by business and industry leaders, lack the skills and knowledge required for the workplace by the business community (Chonko & Caballero, 1991; Chonko & Roberts, 1996; Goldgehn, 1989; Hair, 1990; 1995). Business and industry trends indicate the need for professionals who have a basic knowledge and understanding of various corporate structures and position responsibilities. The business department chairperson on campus, as the individual responsible for these academic units, is by necessity a significant variable in the study of business and marketing education. The chair is responsible for the academic and social development, growth, and learning of these students, and subsequently, is inter-related with the enrollment trends of undergraduate marketing.

According to Jennerich (1978) and Weinberg (1984) the university department chair plays a pivotal role in the administrative and organizational effectiveness of the

college or university. Research indicates that approximately 80% of institutional decision making takes place at the department level (Roach, 1976). Not only does the department chair participate in key decisions ranging from faculty development to student grievances, but also must oversee the department's daily operation (Seagren et al., 1994). Although the majority of institutional decisions are made at the departmental level, those who make these decisions often have not been adequately trained in administrative decision making. According to Fife (1982),

> most chairs come from the ranks of the faculty, see themselves as teachers and scholars, and view their chair position as temporary, intending either to return to the faculty or move on to a higher administrative position. (p. 6)

Bragg (1981) noted that most academic department chairs, "receive no formal training in management or administrative skills" (p. 4) and the assumption of those in higher education institutions appear to be that, "if one has been a professor, one can be a department chair" (p. 4). Yet, despite this lack of adequate training the department chair "has primary responsibility for the academic quality, culture, and operation of the department" (Seagren et al., 1994, p. 5).

The chairperson position has been described as one of being "caught in the middle" (Seagren & Miller, 1994) between upper-level administrators and faculty and is often referred to as having two faces, like the god Janus, the administrator and faculty member. According to Patton (1961) "the chairman can be likened to a combination of housemother, queen bee, and departmental midwife" (p. 459) because "the chairman is called upon to be everything to just about everybody around an educational institution" (p. 459).

Literature and research related to marketing department chairs, marketing education, and marketing majors indicated that business schools have come under recent attack by business and industry leaders (Chonko & Caballero, 1991; Chonko & Roberts, 1996; Keillor et al., 1995; Kress & Wedell, 1993). Also indicated was the importance for marketing department chairs to refocus their efforts on developing a departmental culture that emphasized teaching excellence, to establish relationships with business and industry, and to develop a vision for the future (Chonko & Caballero, 1991; Hair, 1990; 1995; Mason, 1995; Roach, Johnston, & Hair, 1994). Business and industry leaders have indicated that business schools were not providing students with the necessary skills and knowledge required by the business community (Chonko & Caballero, 1991; Chonko & Roberts, 1996; Goldehn, 1989; Hair, 1990; 1995). They have also reported that many of the graduates they attempt to hire lack the skills necessary to perform effectively in the marketplace, subsequently requiring greater workplace and on-the-job training (Chonko & Caballero, 1991; Chonko & Roberts, 1996; Goldgehn, 1989; Hair, 1990; 1995). Some of the deficient skill areas include poor written and oral communication skills, inadequate technological skills, an inability to think critically, insufficient analytical skills (both qualitative and quantitative), and a lack of creativity, and weak decision making skills (Chonko, 1993; Chonko & Caballero, 1991; Chonko & Roberts, 1996; Goldgehn, 1989; McDaniel & White, 1993).

Business schools are now being challenged by their communities to provide an adequately prepared labor pool. The ultimate responsibility for providing the business community with adequately prepared workers falls on the department chair. The chair must address the issues reported by business and industry leaders, and must convey this

needs-based curriculum to faculty who are responsible for teaching (Hair, 1995). The chair, as the individual responsible for the academic unit, is by necessity a significant variable in the study of business and marketing education. The chair is responsible for the academic and social development and growth and learning of these students who are the future industry and business labor pool. Thus, marketing department leaders face a variety of challenges when considering the needs of industry and business, coupled with the administrative responsibilities of the academic unit and the needs of students.

Due to the importance of the department chair in the academic discipline of business, particularly marketing, the position must be examined in terms of the challenges faced by the chair and strategies utilized for coping with these identified challenges. Additionally, recent research has focused on the general position of the department chair, but has not explained the position in an applied education environment. The current study addresses this task.

Research Methods

A stratified random sample was surveyed for the study. The total population of 676 universities and colleges were public 4-year institutions, inclusive of doctoral granting and research universities. Institutions for the study were classified by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Research I and II, and Doctoral I and II universities were collapsed into one category, with the remaining category being comprised of Comprehensive institutions. The research and doctoral categories were combined due to the relatively small cell size and the desire to conceptualize graduate-oriented institutions. A sample size of 100 was selected based on Alreck and Settle's (1985) argument that variances in sample size over 100 are not cost effective in relation

to significance. Therefore, the desired sample included 50 marketing department chairs or division chairs from graduate education oriented institutions and 50 marketing department chairs or division chairs from undergraduate oriented education institutions.

The survey instrument used in the study was an adaptation of that developed by the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the Maricopa Community College, National Community College Chair Academy.

Survey Results

Results related to the demographic profile of marketing department chairs indicated that the majority of all respondents (n=50, 69%) held the title of chairperson, with the second largest category title of marketing department leaders being coordinator or director, with 11 respondents (15%). The majority of these marketing department leaders managed a unit referred to as a department (n=54, 75%). These units largely (80%) contained 600 or fewer full-time students, and 80% of all respondents enrolled 200 or fewer part-time students. Nearly the same percentage (89%) had 20 or fewer full-time faculty members, and 93% of the respondents had 10 or fewer part-time faculty members.

Respondents rated 36 items considered to be predominant professional work-related challenges encountered due to the chair position. The top four challenges from lowest to highest were maintaining a high quality faculty (mean = 1.54, SD .80), changing the curriculum in response to technological development (mean = 1.72, SD .84), obtaining financial resources (mean = 1.85, SD .99), maintaining program quality (mean = 1.86, SD .89). Although no dominant theme emerged from the listing of these

challenges, chairs seemed to indicate that predominant work-related challenges centered around curricular issues, maintaining high quality faculty and programs, technological issues, and obtaining financial resources.

Respondents rated 24 items considered to be response strategies utilized by marketing department leaders in responding to predominant professional work-related challenges encountered in the chair position. The top three strategies utilized, as reported by the respondents, were building stronger partnerships with business and industry (mean = 1.72, SD .84), conducting curriculum reviews to maintain relevance (mean = 1.86, SD .91), and seeking external funding (mean = 1.99, SD 1.06). Department chairs relied on a number of strategies to cope with their unique challenges. Although no dominant theme was present in the listing of these strategies, chairs seemed to rely on the importance of curricular relevance with the workplace and the possible expansion of this in the form of grant writing and soft dollar management.

Respondents' ratings of job challenges and response strategies were clustered into two groups based on institutional mission , graduate-oriented and undergraduate-oriented, to determine if significant differences were identified. For the job challenges, three significant difference were revealed (see Table 2). For the response strategies, only one significant difference was revealed in the agreement level of response strategies utilized (see Table 3).

Discussion

Colleges of business, in general, are not flourishing at the rate that they were in the middle-1980s, yet retain a strong degree of success and admiration on college

campuses. Due in part to the professional nature of their training with specific program outcomes and due in part to success in fund raising, attention to student and faculty recruitment is an increasingly important dimension to business school academic leadership. One dimension, marketing, has been particularly affected by market-demands, and this leadership is particularly in need of direction. Direction for marketing department chairs includes areas such as enrollment management, fund raising, faculty retention and promotion activities, teaching, professional and institutional service, and research.

The current study made an attempt to examine first the challenges marketing department chairs face followed by the tasks they utilize to respond to these challenges. The primary challenges for chairs at both undergraduate and graduate-oriented institutions included faculty, curriculum, money, and generally quality issues. Primary response strategies included developing partnerships, curriculum reviews, and seeking external dollars. These primary findings were strong parallels, reflective of the general state of higher education.

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Table 1

Demographic Profile of Respondents and their Units

Characteristic	Frequency (Percentage)
Respondent Titles	
Chair	50 (69.4%)
Coordinator/Director	11 (15.3)
Head/Assistant Dean/Other	11 (15.3)
Name of Marketing Academic Unit	
Department	54 (75.0%)
Area or Specialization	9 (12.5)
Division or Other	9 (12.5)
Full-Time Student Enrollment	
200 or fewer	21 (29.2%)
201-400	20 (27.8)
401-600	15 (20.8)
More than 600	12 (16.7)
Full-Time Faculty Members	
10 or fewer	34 (47.2%)
11-20	30 (41.7)
More than 20	8 (12.1)

Table 2

Marketing Chair Job Challenges

Job-Related Challenge	Grad Univ. Ch. Mean n=34	Undrgd Univ. Ch. Mean n=38	Overall Mean N=72	F prob	Sig diff
Changing the curriculum in response to technological development	1.735	1.710	1.722	.9020	No
Increasing general education requirements	3.545	3.216	3.371	.2321	No
Increasing human relations training	3.352	3.162	3.253	.4713	No
Internationalizing the curriculum	2.206	2.026	2.111	.4309	No
Keeping pace with the increasing cost of technology	2.212	1.757	1.971	.1073	No
Reallocating monies to programs because of financial constraints	2.848	2.297	2.557	.0543	No
Offering courses through distance education	2.206	2.189	2.197	.9515	No
Promoting greater gender equity	3.030	3.289	3.169	.3176	No
Accommodating cultural diversity	2.470	2.736	2.611	.2694	No

Decreasing growth in transfer programs	3.548	3.405	3.470	.5721	No
Encouraging more technical preparation in high schools	3.848	2.921	3.352	.0016	Yes
Securing and maintaining state-of-the-art technical equipment	2.323	1.710	2.000	.0186	Yes
Increasing influence and impact of state coordinating bodies	3.393	2.973	3.171	.2161	No
Increasing influence and impact of accrediting bodies	2.911	2.081	2.478	.0066	Yes
Increasing the use of business and industry advisory committees	2.088	2.052	2.069	.8738	No
Increasing teaching programs sponsored by specific companies	2.970	3.297	3.140	.2636	No
Increasing involvement of the U.S. government in establishing work conditions in colleges	3.852	3.833	3.842	.9364	No
Adapting to employees who utilize electronic systems and who work at home	2.970	2.973	2.972	.9901	No

Increasing the use of computers in the classroom	2.000	2.026	2.013	.9145	No
Responding to the needs of a wider range of students	2.529	2.315	2.416	.3264	No
Obtaining financial resources	1.911	1.789	1.847	.6036	No
Attracting new student populations	2.500	2.270	2.380	.3464	No
Maintaining program quality	1.911	1.815	1.861	.6521	No
Strengthening the curriculum	2.000	1.947	1.972	.8037	No
Maintaining a high quality faculty	1.529	1.552	1.541	.9036	No
Maintaining the physical plant	3.176	2.918	3.042	.4013	No
Addressing issues related to training for senior faculty	3.090	2.702	2.885	.1259	No
Using quality management techniques (e.g., TQM)	3.147	3.081	3.112	8318	No
Addressing accountability issues	2.617	2.605	2.611	.9617	No
Serving at-risk students	3.352	3.026	3.180	.1849	No
Developing efficient advisory and registration systems and procedures	2.941	2.648	2.788	.3335	No

Employing new teaching techniques	1.941	2.210	2.083	.1171	No
Identifying unit leadership potential from among the faculty	2.500	2.736	2.625	.3046	No
Providing leadership training for faculty and chairs	3.088	2.868	2.972	.4171	No
Increasing emphasis on the graduate program preparation	2.454	2.631	2.549	.5366	No
Utilizing more faculty development techniques such as classroom assessment and peer coaching	2.205	2.473	2.347	.2770	No

Table 3

Marketing Chair Challenge Response Strategies

Response Strategies	Grad Univ. Ch. Mean n=34	Undrgd Univ. Ch. Mean n=38	Overall Mean N=72	F prob	Sig diff
Increasing the emphasis on long-range institutional planning	2.352	2.131	2.236	.3379	No
Developing unit mission statements	2.441	2.078	2.250	.1924	No
Developing campus-wide mission statements	2.941	2.526	2.722	.1407	No
Conducting internal/external environmental assessments	2.272	2.105	2.183	.5210	No
Assessing future employment trends and opportunities	2.235	1.972	2.100	.2421	No
Conducting curriculum reviews to maintain relevance	1.852	1.861	1.857	.9702	No
Considering different approaches for allocating financial resources	2.794	2.314	2.550	.0711	No
Seeking external funding	2.029	1.942	1.985	.7382	No

Assessing leadership styles and profiles of the chairs	3.030	3.083	3.058	.8366	No
Writing job descriptions for chairs	3.333	3.305	3.318	.9206	No
Participating in training academy for chairs	3.303	3.000	3.144	.2844	No
Participating in regional conferences for chairs	3.484	2.888	3.173	.0197	Yes
Participating in national conferences for chairs	3.424	3.027	3.217	.1148	No
Participating in formal graduate courses	3.545	3.333	3.434	.4651	No
Reviewing and revising the organizational chart	3.666	3.571	3.617	.7319	No
Clarifying roles and responsibilities of chairs	3.090	2.777	2.927	.2414	No
Assessing the professional development needs of chairs	3.060	2.916	2.985	.5969	No
Building stronger partnerships with business and industry	1.697	1.750	1.724	.7951	No
Emphasizing the integration of unit plans with	2.437	2.314	2.373	.6690	No

institutional plans					
Increasing staff development programs	2.882	2.736	2.805	.5729	No
Becoming involved in mentoring	2.705	2.394	2.541	.2045	No
Balancing personal and professional activities	2.205	2.157	2.180	.8465	No
Networking with other chairs	2.588	2.500	2.541	.7272	No